

MONTACHUSETT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MMPO) MEETING

**Held Remotely via GoToMeeting.com
Hosted by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
464 Abbott Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453**

Minutes May 20, 2020

S. Woelfel representing MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack called the remote meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. After a roll call of participants, he reviewed how the remote meeting would proceed including public comments being accepted through the chat feature.

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Arthur Frost MassDOT Dist. 3; Mary Jo Bohart, Fitchburg; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Tracy Murphy, Subregion 1; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3;

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Mike Bolduc, MassDOT Dist. 2; Laura Hanson, MassDOT Dist. 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT Dist. 3; Christopher Timmel, FHWA; John Telepciak, MRPC; Joshua Hall, Westminster; Peter Lowitt, Devens Enterprise Commission

STAFF PRESENT

Brad Harris; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; George Kahale; Glenn Eaton

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of April 15, 2020 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the April 15, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and passed. Laura Hanson abstained.

IV. Montachusett FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Review & Discussion of Comments Received on the Draft FFY 2021-2025 TIP*
- *MPO Action to Endorse the Draft TIP*
- *MPO Action to Endorse Montachusett MPO Self Certification*
- *MPO Action to Endorse Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements*

B. Doherty stated that the Draft FFY 2021-2025 TIP 21-day public review and comment period ended last Thursday on the 14th. During that time, we received three sets of comments from MassDOT, the town of Ashburnham and FHWA. He referred members to a handout that summarized all of the comments as well as the responses prepared to address each particular comment. He then proceeded to discuss each comment received and the appropriate response with the MPO members.

A question was asked regarding any comments regarding the Transit Element of the TIP. B. Doherty responded that only one comment from MassDOT related to the Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan for MART and the need to include any target figures. This was updated as requested.

B. Harris informed the MPO members present that he had received notice from FHWA through MassDOT that given the unusual circumstances we are operating under due to the pandemic, that FHWA would except one signature from the MPO Chair on all endorsement pages and that that signature would represent all MPO Signatories present at the meeting.

A motion was made to endorse the FFY 2021-2025 TIP as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

B. Doherty then reviewed with the MPO members the Self Certification of the MPO Transportation Planning Process for the Montachusett Region. This endorsement certifies that the MPO follows all the rules and regulations related to the MPO planning process to the best of their ability.

A motion was made to endorse the Certification of the Montachusett Region MPO Transportation Planning Process. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

B. Doherty then reviewed the Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for the Transportation Sector. This certification covers the various rules and regulations related to the Global Warming Solutions Act and the fact that all requirements are complied with during the planning process for the Montachusett MPO.

A motion was made to endorse the Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for the Transportation Sector. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

V. Montachusett FFY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- *Review & Discussion of Comments Received on the Draft FFY 2021 UPWP*
- *MPO Action to Endorse the Draft UPWP*

S. Bean reviewed with MPO Members, the draft FFY 2021 UPWP that was put out for a 21-day public review and comment period during the same timeframe as the draft TIP. During the comment period, we received eight comments from MassDOT, FHWA, the towns of Sterling and Townsend and the Squannacook Greenway. S. Bean then reviewed the comments and the responses compiled to address the item in question.

A motion was made to endorse the FFY 2021 UPWP as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

VI. Updates

- *MassDOT Highway Division*

A. Frost mentioned that the Leominster Route 13 project is at the final design phase and is expected to be advertised in July. The Ayer Route 2A project #607902 was advertised on April 11th; Westminster Route 140 Resurfacing from Route 2A to Patricia Road is at the 25/75 % level; Lunenburg Bridge Rehabilitation on Route 2A over Pearl Hill Brook is at 100% design; Gardner Pearson Boulevard is at the 25/75 % design level and the Gardner Route 140 Rumble Strip Installation is at 75% design.

M. Bolduc from MassDOT District 2 indicated that there were no updates for the District.

- *Transit*

B. Mahoney stated that the transit authority had a board meeting yesterday on the 19th and it passed the budget for next year. In addition, they will continue to be fare free while still under the COVID restrictions. Driver protection screens have been built by the MART Maintenance crew and are being installed in the buses. MART is also discussing re-introducing the Boston and Worcester shuttles and will be reaching out to the Veteran Centers. Those services should be resuming on June 1st. Ridership has been climbing slightly over the April-May timeframe from a drop of approximately two-thirds of our riders. MART is continuing to work to serve our clients and still maintain safe practices.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Harris stated that MJTC has begun the process to select new officers for the upcoming year. A Nominalizing Committee has been formed and they will present a slate consisting of a Chair, Vice Chair and a Secretary at the June MJTC Meeting. Election will follow at the July meeting.

The MJTC has seen an increase in attendance and participation since the move to a 2:30 pm start time. Subsequently they have to continue with the 2:30 start time for the foreseeable future.

At the next meeting we expect to discuss a potential budget adjustment to the tasks in the current FFY 2020 UPWP. The pandemic and the restrictions that have been imposed have affected some of our work efforts, most notably the Traffic Count Program, to the point where we will examine budgets for the tasks and see if some funds may be shifted from them to other non-effected tasks.

Finally, a handout related to upcoming public meetings of the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) produced by MassDOT was presented to the MPO members.

S. Woelfel indicated that MassDOT is planning on recording all of the meetings and then having them available online for viewing.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Corbosiero and B. Harris stated that the MRPC is in the process of preparing multiple grant proposals to the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). One is for a two-year grant for up to \$400,000 that will enable the MRPC to assist municipalities and the business community through the pandemic and beyond with economic development-related projects. The second proposal relates to a regionwide industrial parks feasibility study. Separately, communities seeking grant writing and administration assistance under a new Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be supported.

We are also working with our communities to possibly submit single-community or regionwide Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposals to assist small businesses, food banks and possibly deliver other public service programs as a part of a statewide pandemic response effort.”

VII. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Harris indicated that the next MPO meeting is scheduled for June 17th at 1:00 PM. The meeting will also likely be a virtual meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 5 20 2020 Agenda

MPO 4 15 2020 Minutes

4 Draft TIP Comments as of 5 20 2020

4 FFY 2021 2025 Draft TIP No Maps

4 GHG Endorsement Page 5 20 2020

4 Int Parties Draft TIP UPWP Memo 4 21 2020 ENG SPA

4 Self Cert Endorsement Page 5 20 2020

5 DRAFT FFY 2021 UPWP

5 UPWP Comments as of 5 5 2020